

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 LONDON 08932

USEEC

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SUBJECT: CONSERVATIVE CRITICISM OF US POLICIES

SUMMARY. OPEN CRITICISM OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN THE
CONSERVATIVE PARTY MAY BE GREATER THAN AT ANY TIME IN
THE PAST TWENTY YEARS. WHILE THE MOST VEHEMENT CRITI-
CISM COMES FROM THE RIGHT WING OF THE PARTY AND FROM
BACKBENCH MPS OF LITTLE INFLUENCE, SOME SHADOW CABINET
MEMBERS AND OTHER SENIOR CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMEN HAVE
ALSO CONDEMNED OUR AFRICAN, DETENTE AND NUCLEAR
POLICIES. ALTHOUGH THE TOUGHER RHETORIC OF THE PAST FEW
DAYS ON SOVIET-CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA MAY PLEASE THE
HAWKS IN THIS RESPECT, CONSERVATIVE PARTY OBJECTIONS TO
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CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICIES MAY CAUSE US PROBLEMS IF
THE PARTY WINS THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION. END SUMMARY.

1. SPARKS OF CRITICISM ABOUT US POLICIES AND LEADERSHIP
RECENTLY HAVE FLARED IN BRITISH POLITICAL RHETORIC,
MOSTLY IN OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE RANKS. WHILE BY NO
MEANS A CONFLAGRATION, THE COMMENTS OF SOME TORIES

WARRANT NOTING BECAUSE THEY MARK A DEPARTURE INTO A HARSHER TONE THAN USUAL. CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS, DETAILED BELOW, SEEM PROMPTED BY FOUR MAIN FACTORS: (A) CALLAGHAN'S PUBLIC PROJECTION OF HIS CLOSE TIES TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS SUPPORT OF US POLICIES THAT RESULTED IN A CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH BASED ON OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ALLEGED SYCOPHANCY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES; (B) SOME PRO-EC SENTIMENT, ALWAYS STRONGER AMONG TORIES THAN ELSEWHERE, HAS FOUND FURTHER GROUND FOR STRESSING THE UK'S EUROPEAN VOCATION BECAUSE OF ALLEGED US FAILURE TO PROVIDE WESTERN LEADERSHIP; (C) CONCERNS ABOUT US INDECISIVENESS AND INABILITY TO TAKE FIRM ACTION IN THE WAKE OF THE ERW DECISION AND IN THE FACE OF THE WEAKENING OF THE DOLLAR; AND (D) OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT ANGLO-AMERICAN APPROACH TO SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES. WHILE THE LABOR PARTY ALSO HAS ITS CRITICS OF THE US, AS TONY BENN NOTED TO US RECENTLY, LABOR'S CAVILS, EVEN BY ITS LEFT-WING, HAVE NEVER EQUALLED THOSE OF SOME TORIES; AND THIS SEEMS TRUE AT PRESENT. IT IS LIKELY, TOO, THAT PRE-ELECTION VYING FOR NOTICE AND SEARCHING FOR ISSUES HAS LED SOME TORIES LATELY TO TURN UP THE VOLUME.

2. BECAUSE OF THE PRIORITY THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ACCORDS TO DEFENSE POLICY, ITS ANTI-COMMUNIST STANCE AND ITS ECONOMIC PRESCRIPTIONS, MANY CONSERVATIVES HAVE CONSIDERED THEMSELVES THE "NATURAL" FRIENDS OF THE US. IN
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THIS VEIN, CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER MARGARET THATCHER AND MANY MEMBERS OF HER SHADOW GOVERNMENT HAVE GONE TO WASHINGTON TO DEVELOP CONTACTS WITH THEIR OPPOSITE NUMBERS IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. MOREOVER, IT IS CLEAR THAT SHE HAS AN UNDOUBTED RESPECT FOR AMERICA AND, SHOULD SHE BECOME PRIME MINISTER, WOULD BASE HER GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICY ON A CLOSE UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNITED STATES. BUT CRITICISM OF US LEADERS AND POLICIES BY SOME PROMINENT CONSERVATIVES RECENTLY HAS BECOME MORE OPEN AND BARBED, SUGGESTING A GENERAL SHIFT IN ATTITUDE THAT REFLECTS A NEGATIVE VIEW OF SOME CURRENT US POLICIES. INDEED, SOME BELIEVE THAT CONSERVATIVE CRITICISM OF THE US IS AT A HIGHER POINT THAN EVER SINCE THE ANGLO-FRENCH INVASION OF EGYPT IN 1956.

3. FRESH CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS NOW BEING EXPRESSED SEEM TO BE OVERLAID ON EARLIER FEARS SOME HELD WHEN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE. BRITISH CONSERVATIVES SHARED THE INITIAL FEARS OF MANY EUROPEANS THAT CARTER ADMINISTRATION POLICY, FOR EXAMOLE, ON HUMAN RIGHTS WAS UN-REALISTIC AND NAIVE ("SOVIET-BASHING" IS ONE THING, BUT PRESSING FOR MAJORITY RULE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IS QUITE

ANOTHER) AND THAT THE POLICY ON NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION WAS AT LEAST PARTLY DESIGNED TO PROTECT US COMMERCIAL INTERESTS. THEY ALSO VOICED CONCERN THAT THE LACK OF WASHINGTON AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE PRESIDENT AND MOST OF HIS WHITE HOUSE STAFF AND CABINET HAVE MADE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION A LARGELY UNKNOWN QUANTITY THAT WOULD REQUIRE AT LEAST A LENGTHY LEARNING PERIOD WHEN US

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POLICIES AND ACTIONS MIGHT BE ERRATIC OR INEFFECTUAL. THESE INITIAL DOUBTS, SLOW TO DISSIPATE (AND IN SOME CASES REINFORCED BY US ACTIONS) ARE A BACKDROP TO THE LATEST, SOMETIMES BITTER, ATTACKS ON THE US.

4. IN A RECENT SPEECH TED HEATH (WHOM SOME BELIEVE THATCHER WOULD APPOINT FOREIGN SECRETARY IN AN EFFORT TO REUNITE THE PARTY, THOUGH THE TWO CLEARLY ARE AT ODDS) EXPRESSED THE THOUGHT THAT THE UK AND THE REST OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY SHOULD DRAW CLOSER TOGETHER NOT ONLY FOR THE INTRINSIC MERIT OF GREATER INTEGRATION BUT ALSO

BECAUSE EUROPE COULD NOT COUNT ON THE US. WHILE, AS WE
EARLIER REPORTED, A THATCHER GOVERNMENT, LIKE THE HEATH
GOVERNMENT OF 1970-74, WOULD LIKELY ACCORD A HIGHER
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PRIORITY TO EUROPE, HEATH'S STATEMENT GOES FAR BEYOND
EARLIER REMARKS, AND MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS A STATE-
MENT REFLECTING THE OPINION OF AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF
THE PARTY.

5. OTHERS WHO ARE PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THATCHER'S CUR-
RENT TEAM HAVE BEEN MORE SPECIFIC IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS.
ANGUS MAUDE, A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY AND
CHAIRMAN OF ITS RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, HAS STATED THERE
IS "CAUSE ENOUGH TO BE JITTERY ABOUT THE COMPETENCE AND
INTENTIONS OF JIMMY CARTER." SIR IAN GILMOUR, SHADOW
DEFENCE SECRETARY AND ONE OF THE PARTY'S MORE LIBERAL
THINKERS, DENOUNCED THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION TO POST-
PONE POSSIBLE PRODUCTION OF ENHANCED RADIATION WARHEADS
AS A "WEAK AND DANGEROUS" DECISION. JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON,
DEPUTY CONSERVATIVE SPOKESMAN ON NORTHERN IRELAND, SAID
THAT VIETNAM HAS INSTILLED IN AMERICA A PSYCHOTIC FEAR
OF CONFRONTATION.

6. THE MOST SCATHING CRITICISM NOTED SO FAR CAME FROM
BACKBENCHER NICHOLAS FAIRBAIRN, WHO -- DESPITE THE FACT
THAT SENIORITY AND ROTATION MADE HIM CHAIRMAN OF THE
SCOTTISH CONSERVATIVES LAST YEAR -- IS NOT HIGHLY
REGARDED BY HIS OWN PARTY LEADERS. IN REPLYING ON
BEHALF OF THE PLATFORM TO THE DEBATE AT THE SCOTTISH
CONSERVATIVE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON MAY 13, HE SAID:
"AMERICA IS LEADERLESS, EFFETE AND PROBABLY HAS NOT THE
RESOLVE OR THE FIBRE TO DEFEND EUROPE AGAINST SOVIET
INVASION AND, DOUBTFULLY, EVEN HER HOMELAND ITSELF."
FRED EMERY, POLITICAL EDITOR OF THE TIMES, COMMENTED
IN HIS REPORT THAT "RARELY CAN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY
HAVE ALLOWED SO RANK AN INSULT TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
US GOVERNMENT FROM A PLATFORM SPEAKER."
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7. FAIRBAIRN WAS ONE OF A HUNDRED OR SO TORY MPS WHO
PARTICIPATED IN A PRIVATE, OFF-THE-RECORD DISCUSSION
WITH USUN AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG IN LONDON MAY 16.
IN A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES PUBLISHED
MAY 20, FAIRBAIRN WROTE THAT THE OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR

THE US GOVERNMENT'S VIEWS AS EXPRESSED BY YOUNG MADE HIM REALIZE THAT THE WARNING HE HAD SOUNDED AT THE SCOTTISH CONFERENCE ABOUT AMERICAN INTENTIONS WAS "MUCH TOO MILD. IF THE WEST IS TO SURVIVE SHE MUST NOW MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH DO NOT RELY ON AMERICAN LEADERSHIP OR AMERICAN POWER SO LONG AS THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IS IN OFFICE."

8. ARCH-CONSERVATIVE BACKBENCHER JULIAN CRITCHLEY, VICE CHAIRMAN OF HIS PARTY'S DEFENCE COMMITTEE, IN AN ARTICLE IN THE MAY 24 DAILY TELEGRAPH (LONDON 8337) ON WHETHER BRITAIN SHOULD CONTINUE ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS COLLABORATION WITH THE US, GO IT ALONE AS FRANCE HAS DONE, OR SEEK TO JOIN WITH FRANCE, WROTE: "CARTER'S AMERICA IS THE POLITICAL REASON FOR EXAMINING THE ALTERNATIVES TO DEPENDENCE UPON THE US FOR BRITAIN'S STRATEGIC DETERRENT." HE SEES A "GROWING (US) DIS-INCLINATION TO RISK WAR WITH THE USSR FOR THE SAKE OF EUROPE" AND ADVOCATES THAT THE "PRACTICAL POSSIBILITIES OF COLLABORATION WITH THE FRANCE OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING SHOULD BE CAREFULLY STUDIED. THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE LOYALTY OF FRANCE TO THE COLLECTIVE DEFENCE OF THE WEST."

9. THESE EXTREME UTTERANCES SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TO INDICATE THAT MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ARE BECOMING "ANTI-AMERICAN." CERTAINLY, ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENTS CAN BE FOUND IN THE PARTY'S RIGHT WING, AND ARE NOT NEW. THEY ARE A COMPOUND OF RESIDUAL RESENTMENT OVER LOSS OF EMPIRE, ENVY THAT POPULIST AMERICA INHERITED

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BRITAIN'S WORLD ROLE, CULTURAL SNOBBERY AND, PROBABLY IN SOME CASES, REAL CONCERN WHETHER AMERICA CAN PROVIDE

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THE FIRM, STEADY LEADERSHIP THEY BELIEVE THE WEST
REQUIRES. THIS UNDERLYING STRAIN OF ANTI-AMERICANISM
(MATCHED ON THE LEFT OF THE LABOR PARTY BY PREJUDICES
AGAINST "CAPITALIST, MILITARIST, INTERVENTIONIST" US
GOVERNMENTS) UNDOUBTEDLY BUTTRESSES THE REACTION AGAINST
THE STYLE AND SPECIFIC POLICIES OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRA-
TION WHICH IS MORE COMMON IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY THAN
IT IS IN THE LABOR PARTY. MANY CONSERVATIVES ALSO HAVE
TOLD US THEY SUSPECT THAT SENIOR US OFFICIALS IN
DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATIONS HAVE A PERSONAL PREFERENCE FOR
LABOR GOVERNMENTS. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, THERE IS A
STRONGER STREAM OF PRO-AMERICAN SENTIMENT AMONG THE MORE
PRAGMATIC CONSERVATIVES, BASED ON PERSONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN
THE WAR AND POST-WAR PERIOD.
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10. CONSERVATIVES PUT GREAT VALUE ON STRONG, PURPOSEFUL
AND CONFIDENT LEADERSHIP. THEY BELIEVE THAT SUCH LEADER-
SHIP IS PARTICULARLY NECESSARY IN THE US, ON WHICH THE
ENTIRE NON-COMMUNIST WORLD DEPENDS. BUT THE IMAGE OF THE
CARTER ADMINISTRATION PRESENTED IN THE BRITISH AND
AMERICAN INFORMATION MEDIA IS NOT POSITIVE, FOR THE MOST
PART. RECENT SUCCESSES, SUCH AS THE PANAMA TREATIES AND
CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR THE SALE OF ADVANCED MILITARY
AIRCRAFT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND EGYPT, AS WELL AS TO ISRAEL,
HAVE ATTRACTED MARGINAL MEDIA INTEREST HERE AND DO NOT
NOTICEABLY DIMINISH THE CRITICISM AMONG CONSERVATIVES OF
WHAT THEY SEE AS AMERICAN INDECISION ON ENHANCED RADIA-

TION WARHEADS, INACTION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND ON SOVIET-CUBAN EFFORTS IN AFRICA IN GENERAL, AND OPPOSITION TO THE RHODESIAN "INTERNAL SETTLEMENT." TO SOME EXTENT, THESE OBJECTIONS ARE MAGNIFIED BY THE NATURE OF OPPOSITION POLITICS HERE, WHICH GIVES RISE TO STRONG RHETORIC.

11. THE CARTER/YOUNG POLICY ON SOUTHERN AFRICA (AS IT IS SEEN HERE), LARGELY DEVELOPED AND CONDUCTED IN TANDEM WITH THE LABOR GOVERNMENT, IS A PARTICULARLY NEURALGIC POINT. WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS, SUCH AS THE CONSERVATIVE LEADER IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, LORD CARRINGTON, BARNEY HAYHOE, NEIL MARTEN AND A FEW YOUNGER BACKBENCHERS, THE CONSERVATIVES SEE US/UK EFFORTS TO MELD THE PRESENT SALISBURY GOVERNMENT AND THE PATRIOTIC FRONT AS LETTING THE MARXIST FOX INTO THE PRO-WESTERN HENHOUSE. RACIALISM, VESTIGES OF COLONIAL PATERNALISM AND FAMILY TIES WITH RHODESIA MIGHT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS VIEW, BUT CONSERVATIVE PERCEPTION OF THE COMMUNIST THREAT TO WESTERN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA IS THE DOMINANT THEME. THE RECENT SHABA
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INCURSION WAS TAKEN AS FURTHER PROOF OF COMMUNIST INTENTIONS AND THE LIMITED AND BRIEF WESTERN RESPONSE AS FURTHER EVIDENCE THAT LITTLE RESISTANCE WILL BE OFFERED BY PRESENT GOVERNMENTS (WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF FRANCE).

12. AS LONG AS THE CONSERVATIVES ARE IN OPPOSITION, THEIR ATTITUDE HAS LITTLE IMMEDIATE EFFECT ON POLICY. SHOULD THEY WIN THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION IN 5-17 MONTHS, HOWEVER, WE COULD HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW THATCHER GOVERNMENT ON DETENTE AND STRATEGIC POLICY AND IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS, MOST IMMEDIATELY ON RHODESIA. RELATIONS WOULD PROBABLY BE EASIER IF CARRINGTON BECAME FOREIGN SECRETARY THAN IF HEATH OR SHADOW FOREIGN SECRETARY JOHN DAVIES TOOK OVER THE PORTFOLIO. IN THE

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MEANTIME, THE FIRMER US STANCE OF THE PAST FEW DAYS
AGAINST SOVIET/CUBAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, ACCOMPANIED
BY VISIBLE EFFECTS ON OUR RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW AND
CONSULTATIONS WITH INTERESTED EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS ON
COUNTERING COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA WILL HELP
MITIGATE CONSERVATIVE CONCERNS. BUT THE CUMULATIVE
EFFECT OF HOW WE HAVE HANDLED A NUMBER OF FOREIGN POLICY
ISSUES HAS HAD A DISQUIETING IMPACT IN THE CONSERVATIVE
PARTY, WHICH WILL PROBABLY LEAVE A LEGACY OF SKEPTICISM
AND SUSPICION FOR A CONSIDERABLE TIME. MOREOVER, WE
WILL NEED TO CONTINUE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THOSE
ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY WHICH APPEAR TO BE ANTI-AMERICAN
WHEN IT IS FASHIONABLE OR REVEALS SOME NURTURED BIAS,
AND THOSE ELEMENTS WHICH ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT
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THE APPARENT DIRECTION OF US POLICY AND LEADERSHIP.
THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN DO OR SHOULD DO ABOUT A NICHOLAS
FAIRBAIRN, WHO PROVIDES GOOD NEWSPAPER COPY BUT IS OF
LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE. WHEN IAN GILMOUR IS DISTURBED
ABOUT US, HOWEVER, WE RISK LOSING THE UNDERSTANDING OF
A FIGURE OF IMPORTANCE AND MODERATION IN A FUTURE TORY
GOVERNMENT.

13. WE HAVE BEEN EMBARKED FOR SOME MONTHS NOW ON A
CONCERTED EFFORT AT ALL LEVELS I THE EMBASSY TO

EXPLAIN OUR POLICIES TO CONSERVATIVE LEADERS AND BACK-
BENCHERS ALIKE. EXPLANATIONS ALONE WILL NOT RESTORE
TORY CONFIDENCE WHERE IT IS ERODED, BUT THEY CAN AT
LEAST PRESENT ANOTHER SIDE TO CASES SO OFTEN BADLY
UNDERSTOOD IN THE UK. FINALLY, CONSISTENT STATEMENTS
BY SENIOR US OFFICIALS GEARED TO WESTERN EUROPEAN
AUDIENCES AND CONCERNS CAN ALSO HELP TO STRENGTHEN
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